**The GRADE Test**

As citizens in a democracy, you'll be confronted with policy questions relating to information. Is it important for people in a democracy to know what the government is doing? Can the media print or broadcast all information they receive? What press policy should the military use in wartime? Government policies can profoundly affect our nation and your life. In a democracy, you have a say on government policies. It's important that you take a critical look at them. Use the following GRADE Test to evaluate a policy:

**Goal.** What is the goal of the policy? If you don't know what it's supposed to do, you can't measure its success or failure. Policies are designed to address problems. What problem or problems is this policy supposed to address?

**Rivals.** Who supports the policy? Who opposes it? Knowing the rivals can help you understand who the policy might affect and whether the policy favors special interests. Also, rivals are terrific sources for information. Be sure to check their facts, though.

**Advantages.** What are the policy's benefits? What is good about the policy? Will it achieve (or has it achieved) its goal? Will it achieve the goal efficiently? Is it inexpensive? Does it protect people from harm? Does it ensure people's liberties?

**Disadvantages.** What are the policy's costs? What is bad about the policy? Is it inefficient? Is it expensive? Does it cause harm? Does it intrude on people's liberties? Are there any potential consequences that may cause damage?

**Evaluate the alternatives.** One alternative is to do nothing. Most serious problems have various policy proposals. Evaluate them. Look at their goals, advantages, and disadvantages.

Once you GRADE the competing policies, weigh their advantages and disadvantages and decide which you favor.

**A C T I V I T Y**

**Press Rules for Future Wars: A Presidential Commission**

In this activity, students role play a commission recommending rules for the press in future military actions.

1. Divide into groups of three or four.
2. In each group, imagine that you are members of a commission appointed by the president to recommend press rules as America responds to terrorism. Your commission has been presented with three different sets of press rules—the three in the article.
3. Each group should:

A. Assign roles to each member of the group: a commission chairperson (who leads the discussion), a recorder (who writes the group's answers to each GRADE test on a sheet of paper), a reporter (who reports the commission's findings to the class), and, if the group has four members, a responder (who answers any questions the class may have about the group's findings).

B. Evaluate the three policies using the GRADE Test above and decide which to recommend to the president.

C. Prepare to present their decision and reasons for it to the class.

1. When the groups finish, call on reporters from different groups to answer GRADE tests for Policy #1: Press Pool Rules. Then call on reporters to answer GRADE tests for Policy #2: Proposed Rules by News Media. Ask which policy the groups favored. Hold a discussion over why they favored one policy over another.